

28 September 2016

*Dr. Valery Engel, President of the European Centre for Democracy Development*

Dear Mr. Moderator, dear colleagues,

Anti-Roma sentiments are the most widespread form of Xenophobia in Europe. American Pew Research Center reports that in 2015, 82% of Italians, 67% of Greeks, 64% of Hungarians and 61% of French people have a negative attitude towards the Roma. In addition, 52% of young Ukrainians aged 35 years old have negative feelings towards them. The same feelings have 20% of Russians.

The most blatant cases of discrimination Roma related to the work, health care and education. All known are the cases of Roma segregation in educational institutions in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Greece and other countries. The facts are well known and the authorities of these countries are taking measures to eradicate these facts. But I was very alarming another:

What is the segregation? According to the recommendations of Ljubljana, segregation - is when a disproportional number of students belonging to some communities, is forced into special schools, individual housing buildings or classes without an objective and reasonable justification. The problem is that more and more often we hear statements to the effect that the schools for ethnic minorities are a form of educational segregation. The situation with the Roma are trying to use not for the benefit of Roma, but to make more difficult the life of the other national minorities, to facilitate their forced assimilation.

There is a substitution of concepts, replacing of the voluntary choice of the representatives of national minorities to study on their mother tongue by compulsory isolation of certain national groups of students studying by in the same language as the other students. This is a very dangerous trend, which has not yet received a proper assessment of the OSCE institutions.

The day before yesterday, we once again heard the attempt to replace these concepts from the mouth of one of the representatives of human rights organizations of one of the Eastern European countries.

In this regard, I make a recommendation:

- 1) once again officially announce the OSCE position on the segregation and the rights of national minorities to receive education in their mother language and thereby clarify the respective recommendations of Ljubljana.
- 2) I also appeal to the new Austrian presidency with a proposal to conduct appropriate training for representatives of non-governmental organizations that call themselves human rights.